



# VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

## READY B5 RECAP

JUNE 2022



DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

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# MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS



Dear all,

As we wrap up another school year and head into summer, we have much to celebrate in early childhood in Virginia. Yes, the year has been a tough one for family day homes, child care centers, Head Start programs and schools. You have faced challenge after challenge – Delta and Omicron surges, persistent staffing shortages and increased academic and social-emotional needs of our children. In light of this, I wanted to take a moment to recognize how much we have accomplished together:

- Virginia has successfully returned to in-person across all early childhood settings.
- Ready Regions have launched statewide and more programs are participating in VQB5. Virginia completed 10,000 classroom or family day home observations this year.
- Virginia now offers more than 40 approved curriculum options, including StreamIn3, our free or low cost option. More than 2,000 classrooms have signed up.
- More than 6,000 child care, Head Start and family day home educators registered for RecognizeB5 and will receive up to \$2000.
- More than \$35 million in funding now supports early childhood quality improvement.
- More than 1,200 children benefited from Mixed Delivery this year, a 525% increase from the prior year.
- More than 20,000 children benefited from VPI this year, including 1,100 in community settings.
- Virginia has increased participation in the Child Care Subsidy Program from ~14,500 at the peak of COVID to more than 31,000 children, potentially the highest-ever participation.
- Virginia continues to strengthen relationships with Head Start in order to maximize federal funding and help our most vulnerable families access comprehensive two-generation services.
- With nearly 14,000 family survey responses, Virginia is learning more about what families need and want.
- We now reach more than 12,000 colleagues with our weekly Readiness Connections and, in turn, you help us share information with thousands of educators, families and children.



What a remarkable set of shared accomplishments. But that's not all. We also have much to look forward to and I invite you to listen to our [Early Childhood State of the State webinar](#) on July 14 at 11 AM to learn more.

Working together, we can continue to overcome challenges, innovate and solve problems and help ensure that all children in Virginia have the opportunity to enter school ready. As always, thank you for your commitment to serving our littlest learners.

With deepest appreciation,

Jenna

# EARLY CHILDHOOD GOALS

## ACCESS AND CHOICE

Expand accessibility of quality public and private early care and education to reach vulnerable children, ensure all families have quality choices and better prepare Virginia's future workforce.

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Increase the capacity of early care and education providers to engage and support families to foster children's healthy development, learning, and well-being towards school readiness.

## QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Improve child outcomes by supporting continuous improvement of teacher-child interactions and use of curriculum in all classrooms/settings.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

Partner with providers to keep all children in care healthy and safe.

## REGIONAL CAPACITY AND INNOVATION

Establish regional infrastructure supported by strong statewide data systems to coordinate across all settings, address unique community needs and ensure opportunity for all children statewide.





# VIRGINIA CONTINUES TO GROW ITS ELDS IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT



**"Birth-five educators need quality instructional tools and opportunities to engage in aligned professional development."**

VDOE continues to build its toolkit of resources for supporting implementation of [Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards: Birth-Five Learning Guidelines](#). Many tools and resources have been added to the array of early learning supports available to ECE professionals throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

Fall 2021, as all of Virginia's publicly funded birth to five programs began full implementation of the new ELDS, several domain related initiatives launched--new and improved! The [ECE Resource Hub](#), a collection of free resources focused on helping Early Childhood educators better foster young children's social emotional skills, grew in its scope and now covers content for infants and toddlers, in addition to the already included preschool resources. This summer the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (UVA-CASTL) team will be updating the Hub to make it easier for birth to five educators to find and share professional development resources and also adding expanded ELDS aligned resources ([subscribe](#) to get the monthly newsletter and learn more about [What's on the Hub](#)).

And to further promote young children's healthy social emotional development, VDOE, in partnership with Child Development Resources (CDR) and University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (UVA-CASTL), launched an **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) Program pilot**. Over 100 early childhood teachers and families have received support to date, and pilot services will continue to be provided in the Greater Richmond Area throughout the upcoming school year (2022-2023).

# VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT F EDUCATION EARLY CHILDHOOD



**Winter and Spring 2022**, VDOE continued to grow the toolkit. Although the official start date for **WIDA Early Years** state membership began in October, Virginia's [Making Connections](#) document was added to the [WIDA Resource Library](#) in January 2022. This resource provides guidance to educators on how to use the ELDS and WIDA Early Years resources to plan instruction for young English/multilingual learners. Early educators and professionals will continue to have free access to resources through [WIDA Early Years eLearning](#) and the [Promising Practices Implementation Kit](#) this upcoming school year.

**Summer 2022** is here, and as we prepare for the new school year, there are two additional “year-end” ELDS focused highlights to note: **STREAMin3** and **Virginia's ELDS Micro-credential Pilot**. To increase access to quality early childhood curriculum, VDOE has partnered with UVA-CASTL to provide access to the [STREAMin3 Birth to Five Curriculum](#) option. The STREAMin3 curriculum is ELDS aligned and available at no-to-low cost to all publicly funded birth to five programs. STREAMin3 onboarding is currently in progress and training will begin in August. Read more about EC curriculum updates in the [Early Learning Support section](#) of the newsletter.

VDOE has also partnered with faculty from the Vinod Chachra Innovative Mobile Personalized Accelerated Competency Training (IMPACT) Lab at Radford University to pilot an **ELDS Micro-credential Pilot**. Initiated in response to the need to provide birth-to-five educators universal guidance and support for effectively implementing VA's new ELDS, the pilot launched on June 15. Nearly 1,000 ECE professionals have already signed up to complete this 5-hour, non-credit bearing, online, self- and competency-based micro-credential. The ELDS Micro-Credential Pilot will inform future Early Childhood workforce development investments.



## SPOTLIGHT ON



### Dr. Tamilah Richardson

#### Director of Early Childhood Learning

Dr. Tamilah Richardson began her service to the Department of Education in June of 2019 as the Associate Director of Early Childhood Learning. Primarily focused on project leadership for the development of Virginia's new birth to five learning guidelines (the VA ELDS) and the statewide rollout of the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP), Tamilah's scope of work has grown to now more broadly involve strategic planning and implementation support for early childhood standards, curriculum and assessment for all publicly funded birth to five programs, including child care centers, family day homes and Head Start. This work continues to evolve under her directorship of the Office of Early Childhood Learning as of June 2021.

Prior to transitioning into state level early childhood care and education systems building work, Dr. Richardson was engaged in several P-16 research and policy projects, including support of the Understanding the Power of Preschool for Kindergarten Success study as a PreK CLASS observer. The majority of her early career as an educator, however, was spent at the local school division level, where she was a Virginia Preschool Initiative and Title I preschool teacher, an elementary school library media specialist and PreK 4 Coordinator. Deeply committed to giving back to her community, these service years were all provided within the same school division where she completed her PK-12 schooling. She has earned degrees from Hampton University (BS- English with an ECE Concentration), Old Dominion University (M.S.Ed.) and The George Washington University (EdS and Ed.D in Education Administration and Policy Studies).

Dr. Richardson continues to leverage her background and passion for equity and excellence in education; early literacy development and family engagement and empowerment in her work at VDOE. Tamilah is a proud mother of three children who are students in Virginia's public school and higher education systems. She relishes the opportunity to partner and serve early childhood professionals and vested stakeholders across the Commonwealth.

## STAFF | PROVIDER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The VDOE Division of Early Childhood Care and Education includes six key offices that together support the agency's goal to support birth-to-five programs in the state. These offices include:

- Office of Child Care Health and Safety
- Office of Access and Enrollment
- Office of Classroom Learning
- Office of Head Start Collaboration
- Office of Operations
- Office of Quality and Workforce

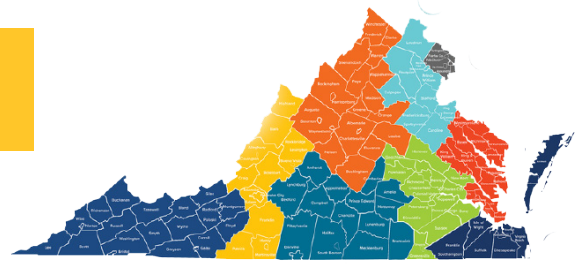


This quarter, we were pleased to welcome the following new members to our team:

**Alex McPherson**, Associate Director of Enrollment; **Amy Tomblin**, Licensing Inspector (Valley); **Angela Dudek**, Licensing Inspector (Northern); **Ariel Hayes**, Licensing Inspector (Fairfax); **Denise Branscome**, Associate Director of Early Childhood Grants and Finance; **Jim Basham**, Licensing Inspector (Piedmont); **Karen Barger**, Program Support Technician (Western); **Kristy Atanackovic**, Licensing Inspector (Fairfax); **LaTasha Smith**, Licensing Inspector (Central); **LaToya McLean**, Program Support Technician (Fairfax); **Molly Muscat**, Licensing Inspector (Central); **Nicole Scott**, Licensing Inspector (Piedmont); **Tameika King**, Licensing Inspector (Fairfax); **Tara Martin**, Licensing Inspector (Piedmont); **Robin Ely**, Licensing Administrator (Central); **Sheila Nelson**, Licensing Inspector (Fairfax)



# READY REGIONS



## Blue Ridge

### What are you most looking forward to next year about your Ready Regions work?

In the upcoming year, the [Blue Ridge Ready Region](#) is committed to the cultivation of existing and new relationships to knit together the leadership and support necessary to create progress towards equity. It is inspiring to have organizations and individuals contacting us, wanting to be part of making Ready Region Blue Ridge successful. In the United Way of Greater Charlottesville's footprint, it took a number of years to build the support necessary to successfully impact our local early education system. With the recent focus on early education at the state level, we look forward to accelerating this progress across our entire region.

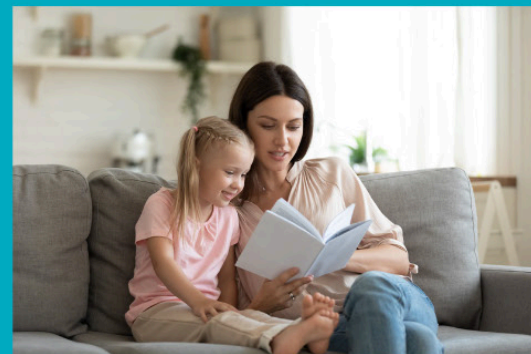
### What are you most proud of/what have been the highlights of your RR work so far?

The formation of the Blue Ridge Ready Region included working through 3 separate Preschool Development Grant (PDG) communities. During the past six months we have worked hard to blend the three PDG grants into one, with shared priorities identified in our first draft document Ready Region Blue Ridge Shared Values. Our leadership team represents the full region, and actively participated in creatively designing workplans to meet all our regional needs. This has included expanding coverage to unserved counties in our region with the Mixed Delivery Grant. We are also proud of our work to build a coordinated enrollment system through our [go2grow](#) website. In the upcoming year, this website will expand to include the Harrisonburg/Rockingham and the Northern Shenandoah Valley areas.

### What makes your Ready Region special and/or unique?

While each Ready Region may be comparable in terms of population, our region is large and primarily rural. As expected, most of the existing early education work has been centered in the primary cities. We see a significant need to improve services and access in the rural counties. In addition, we have examined the data and see disparities that vary across our region. For example, in the City of Charlottesville the children suffering from the greatest disparities are black, while in the City of Harrisonburg the children suffering the greatest disparities are Hispanic or Latino. An intervention designed to serve one group may not impact another group in the same way. Therefore, we want to be intentional in the design of programs so that all children benefit from an improved early education system. Additionally, we have started working with partners who have significant early education experience, and with other partners who are brand new to this work. In FY23, our leadership team has also identified a need to build local observer capacity in our region. To accomplish this, we are developing plans to increase the number of PreK CLASS observers by recruiting early education program leaders, such as child care center directors, to complete their own local observations while our quality partners focus on infant and toddler observations.

Visit the [Ready Region Blue Ridge](#) information page to learn more!





# REFLECTIONS

A Summary of First Quarter Successes



## Child Care Centers and Family Day Homes

The Office of Child Care Health and Safety (OCCHS) resumed all onsite inspections in April of 2022. The team has enjoyed reconnecting in person with providers to see all of the wonderful things taking place in child day programs despite the challenges that providers continue to face during the pandemic. Field offices have also recommenced in-person Phase II trainings to provide training on regulatory requirements to new and existing providers. The OCCHS has been busy providing support and guidance to providers using the new online portal, Child Care Application Processing System (CCAPS). CCAPS allows providers to submit Virginia Central Registry Requests and in-state background check

portability requests to expedite the hiring process. Providers are also able to submit initial applications for licensure, voluntary registration, and initial filings for an exemption to licensure through CCAPS. During the last quarter, OCCHS was pleased to secure enough funding to be able to continue to cover the costs of fingerprint based criminal background checks for child care providers through June of 2023. OCCHS looks forward to kicking off the new fiscal year and seeing all of the great summer activities that child day programs have planned. Have a safe and wonderful summer season!

## Virginia Preschool Initiative

VPI Programs have been busy wrapping up the 21-22 school year while simultaneously preparing for the 22-23 school year. The recently passed budget expands access and increases funding for VPI. Mirroring this, projected enrollment has increased for the upcoming school year for both 4-year-olds and the 3-year-old expansion to VPI programs. Projected enrollment in the 3-year-old expansion program has tripled since its beginning in the 20-21 school year. Many divisions submitted waivers to increase the use of Local Eligibility Criteria for the next school year, this ensures the VPI program can be responsive to local needs. Many VPI programs participated in VQB5 Practice Year 1 and nearly all will be part of Practice Year 2. VPI continues to demonstrate its commitment to quality accessible early education for all children in the Commonwealth.



## Early Childhood Special Education

The 2023 Virginia State Budget included changes to the Virginia Preschool Initiative to support the inclusion of children with Individualized Education Programs (IEP). Beginning in 2022-2023, all children with IEPs are VPI eligible, regardless of household income. This change, in addition to programs continued goal to have a target inclusion rate of 10% continues to support inclusive learning environments for young children. Those programs not meeting the target are to provide the reason why and how the target will be met in the upcoming school year.

The [VDOE Training and Technical Assistance Centers \(TTAC\)](#) continue to accept applications to provide technical assistance to improve inclusive practices in early childhood programs.

This quarter, a resource was developed to help programs plan class size of inclusive classrooms. The [Preschool Class Size Guidance Document](#) outlines requirements and regulations that impact the number of students with IEPs placed in a classroom as well as offers guidance for best practice.

## Head Start

As Head Start programs continue moving forward towards implementing increased comprehensive services to children and families, many supports were provided through the additional funding sources allotted to programs throughout the pandemic. To ensure continued services to families the Biden Administration signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 that approved a 2.28% Cost of Living Adjustment for all Head Start Recipient Agencies above their base funding. These funds must be utilized towards increased pay scales

for current staff and pay ranges for vacant positions. Other funding awarded to Recipient Agencies included FY22 Quality Improvement funds that allows each grant recipient to be allocated an amount proportionate to their federal funded enrollment.

Additionally, the Office of Head Start has disseminated updated guidance through Information Memorandum [ACF-IM-HS-22-04 Competitive Bonuses for the Head Start Workforce](#) that addresses the implementation of financial incentives for retention and recruitment. These grant funding measures will allow Head Start leaders to focus on programmatic decisions based on expectations for the upcoming 2022-2023 program year.



## VQB5

VQB5 Practice Year 1 was a huge success thanks to the participation of over 1400 early childhood programs, coordinated by Preschool Development Grant communities across Virginia. Results from nearly 10,000 fall and spring CLASS observations, along with curriculum information is being used this summer to recognize growth, reflect on what worked, and make adjustments as needed to prepare for Practice Year 2. In May, local program leaders from child care, VPI and Head Start shared their experiences using CLASS during the [Strengthening Quality Interactions CLASS Panel Discussion](#). On June 15th, the Board of Education approved the [VQB5 Guidelines for Practice Year 2](#). Registration for the second practice year will occur between August 1 - September 16, 2022 through Ready Regions, and will be available in every part of Virginia. Early Childhood programs may indicate their interest in participating in Practice Year 2 prior to July 31st by filling out the [VQB5 Interest Form](#).

## Early Learning Support

Access to quality early childhood curriculum options continues to increase for Virginia's birth to five programs. Resulting from implementation of the state's expanded curriculum review process, there are now 44 VDOE-approved infant, toddler, preschool and family day home/mixed aged curriculum options-- and the list continues to grow! Included on this list (visit the VDOE [Early Childhood Standards, Curriculum and Instruction](#) webpage to view the most recent list) is Virginia's no-to-low cost curriculum option, [STREAMin3](#). To date, nearly 500 programs have signed up for free access to the STREAMin3 curriculum (via downloadable pdfs) and professional development library; 1,985 classrooms from a select group of these programs will also receive printed curriculum materials, resources (including a set of children's books used in the curriculum) and additional training and coaching support at no cost. Learn more about [Curriculum Options for VQB5 Practice Year 2](#) and [How to Get the STREAMin3 Curriculum](#).





# FOCUS ON WELLNESS

## Enacting “Community Care”

As we prepare to close out the first practice year of VQB5, it is important to recognize that the many successes highlighted throughout the year and within this quarter’s Ready B5 Recap were only made possible because of the collective efforts of Virginia’s dedicated ECCE community (i.e., YOU!). Throughout a global pandemic and unimaginable tragedy and loss, you have shown resilience and deep compassion, while often sacrificing your own mental and emotional well-being. We are grateful for all you have done to well serve children and families, despite the many overwhelming circumstances endured over the past 2+ years.

VDOE is renewed in its commitment to co-creating systems level changes that focus on improving well-being outcomes for children, families, educators and providers across the Commonwealth (read about Virginia’s [ECMHC Program Pilot](#) in this issue’s feature story). Prompting [community care](#), we encourage you to practice one simple wellness tip this summer: **Prioritize rest (as often as you can) and encourage others to do the same.**

*“When we rest, whether alone or in community, we can replenish our energy, tap into intuition and creativity, become re-inspired, and realize we are okay just as we are....We reclaim our time, minds, bodies, and spirits, and build a profound compassion for ourselves and each other.”* Sydney Cutler-Abich  
(Cited in [7 Ways To Integrate Community Care Into Your Wellness Practice](#)).

Rest well!

